

U.S. Naval Asylum, Surgeon's Residence  
(U.S. Naval Home, Surgeon's Residence)  
Southwest corner Gray's Ferry Avenue and  
Twenty-fourth Street  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1622 C

HABS  
PA,  
SI-PHILA,  
577C-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA  
5996-

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

UNITED STATES NAVAL ASYLUM, SURGEON'S RESIDENCE  
(United States Naval Home, Surgeon's Residence)

HABS No. PA-1622-C

Location: Southwest corner of Gray's Ferry Avenue and Twenty-fourth Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. The building is located approximately 150' southwest of Biddle Hall.

Present Owner: General Services Administration; surplus property since 1976.

Significance: The Surgeon's Residence is a fine Greek Revival structure of handsome proportions and fine detail, designed by William Strickland, one of the major 19th century architects. The building is identical in design to the neighbor house, Governor's Residence (HABS No. PA-1622-B), also designed by Strickland.

### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1844
2. Architect: William Strickland (1788-1854)
3. Original and subsequent owners: From 1844 to 1976 the property was owned by the U.S. Navy. Today it is owned by the General Services Administration.
4. Alterations and additions: The main stairway was enclosed when the building was converted to a two-family structure. Bathrooms have been added in the first and second floors. The kitchen was modernized in the 1960s. Other alterations have not been documented.

### PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

#### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The house has a symmetrical front (east) with a two-story veranda. A central hall floor plan is used.
2. Condition of fabric: The building has been in excellent condition for many years. However, after General Services Administration took possession of the building in 1976, the structure is in deteriorating condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building measures approximately 47' (three-bay front) x 100'. It is two stories high.
2. Foundations: Coursed granite ashlar.
3. Walls: Stucco on brick.
4. Structural system, framing: Not documented.
5. Porches: First and second floor front verandas, each with four pairs of slender cast-iron columns. The columns are fluted and have lotus-leaf capitals. The ornamented cast-iron railings are decorated with naval motifs - ropes, anchors, dolphins, and eagles.
6. Chimneys: Two chimneys on each side elevation are joined with the parapet wall. Each chimney is of brick construction with concrete and metal flashing.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Central entry has wooden double doors of four panels and five-pane sidelights.
  - b. Windows and shutters: The sash is six-over-six lights. No shutters are present, but the old brackets for shutters are still in place in first and second floor window openings.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Hipped; standing metal seam.
  - b. Cornice: Wooden box cornice above plain entablature and topped by parapet.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
  - a. Cellar: Rectangular front section with connecting narrower section to rectangular rear portion.
  - b. First floor: Central hall with flanking rooms each side. The stairway is in the center. A corridor with a north exterior door leads to the rear kitchen wing of two rooms.

- c. Second floor: Central hall with three rooms across the east (front) section and two rooms in the rear section. The stairway is in the center.
- 2. Stairways: Enclosed stair.
- 3. Flooring: Oak parquet floor in first floor; brick and concrete floor in basement.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
- 5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Wood panel doors (top panel: one horizontal; middle panels: two vertical; bottom: one horizontal).
  - b. Windows: Not documented.
- 6. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: All front rooms in the main portion have fireplaces with handsome marble surrounds and plain marble mantles.
  - b. Lighting: Converted to electricity.
- D. Site:
  - 1. General setting and orientation: The structure is situated southwest of the Biddle Hall, with its central axis running southeast to northwest towards Gray's Ferry Avenue.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Bibliography:

##### 1. Secondary and published sources:

American Guide Series, Philadelphia, Philadelphia: William Penn Association, 1937. pp. 502-04.

Gilchrist, Agnes Addison. William Strickland, Architect and Engineer, 1788-1854. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950.

Shippen, Edward, M.D., U.S.N. "Some Account of the Origin of the Naval Asylum at Philadelphia." Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Bibliography, VII, No. 2 (1883), pp. 117ff.

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ADDENDUM TO:  
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